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ABSTRACT

An approach is presented that allows teachers to examine their teaching strategies and gradually redesign them if necessary. Objectives are defined and/or clarified as a result of the ongoing teacher-student activities. The model consists of four major parts: (1) preliminary identification of overall classroom goals, (2) identification of current classroom activities, (3) identification of objectives through the activities, and (4) questions to ask for examining the appropriateness and completeness of the classroom course structure. To achieve maximum benefit, the process used in implementing the model necessitates a continual monitoring or adherence to a daily routine of record-keeping and perhaps a weekly summarization. (Author/MLF)

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FROM WHERE YOU ARE . . .

TO WHERE YOU WANT TO BE!

An alternate approach for identifying classroom objectives

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EA 009 155

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FROM WHERE YOU ARE . . .

TO WHERE YOU WANT TO BE!

by

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INTRODUCTION

Much to the consternation of some teachers and principals, the demand for written classroom objectives has not faded from the education scene. Instead, the current emphasis on educational needs assessment has highlighted objective writing once again. While almost all educators do perceive a value, albeit undefined, for teaching within the framework of objectives, the majority of these same people will discuss the futility of writing hundreds of objectives that eventually end up on the shelves of the teachers' lounge -- never to be examined until the next North Central evaluation comes around.

Why does this apparent contradiction between the value and the usage of classroom objectives occur? Perhaps one major reason has been the approach normally taken within a school district toward the actual process of writing objectives. The usual model has been a hierarchical model as illustrated below:

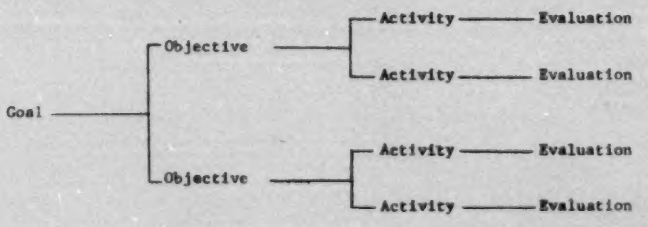

Figure 1: Hierarchical Classroom Model

Following this model, the normal procedure involved teacher workshops or extended contract days during which teachers would identify broad goals (or accept predetermined goals) and then attempt to write behavioral objectives a' la Mager. Some teachers were able to do this quite well and even went on to complete the model by writing activities and evaluation procedures to accompany each objective. These teachers most likely gained both personally and professionally by the whole process. But for the majority, it was a time consuming and frustrating task that usually ended at the *objective* stage with a resolve never to take another look *at those (expletive) objectives again!*

The major difficulty with the model and the probable reason for the usual frustration and anger of teachers stems from the fact that administrators are usually placed in the position of asking teachers to *write objectives* or *to give a direction* to their teaching. The message that the teachers receive becomes one of dissatisfaction. It is as if the administrator is asking for a complete revamping of habits and performances that have given a certain amount of satisfaction and success over the length of a teaching career.

A less threatening approach would be one that would allow teachers to examine teaching strategies and gradually redesign them if necessary. The approach to be presented here is certainly less threatening, less frustrating and, hopefully, perceived to be more useful.

Essentially, all teachers teach with some sort of targets or objectives in mind, but for the most part, these objectives have not been written and can be identified only through a close examination of classroom activities. Assuming this is at least partially true, it is logical to begin where the teachers *are* (activities, methods, strategies . . .) rather than where they *should be* (objectives). While this approach loses purity in the theoretical sense, it is far more practical.

The model described on the following pages takes the practical approach. Objectives are defined and/or clarified as a result of the on-going teacher-student activities. One distinct advantage is that this gives a *true* picture, rather than an *ideal* picture, of the objectives as they exist in the classroom.

In presenting the model, the one major assumption is that there exists some reason for teachers taking a close look at their classroom strategies and objectives. This reason may be any or all of the following:

1. Administrators ask teachers to write objectives.
2. Teachers want to improve instruction.
3. Teachers want to be able to better communicate their classroom program to others.
4. Teachers want to build an accountable position for themselves.

The model consists of four major parts: (1) preliminary identification of overall classroom goals; (2) identification of current classroom activities; (3) identification of objectives through the activities; and (4) questions to ask for examining the appropriateness and completeness of the classroom course structure. To achieve maximum benefit, the process used in implementing the model necessitates a continual monitoring or adherence to a daily routine of record-keeping and perhaps a weekly summarization. While this sounds tedious, chances are good that each teacher is already doing much of this in the planning of daily lessons.

Part 1: IDENTIFICATION OF GLOBAL COURSE GOALS

The first step in the process does not differ from the model in Figure 1. In fact the entire model to be found on the following pages does not differ substantially from the one found in Figure 1. What makes it different is the technique for implementation.

To begin with, teachers are asked to identify 3-7 goals for each course that they teach. These goals should be simply stated, brief and broad enough in scope to cover at least an entire semester. Ideally this should be done at the beginning of the school year and then periodically examined for appropriateness using questions described later. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between a course and the goals associated with the course. A worksheet designed to assist teachers in identifying these global course goals is shown in Appendix A.

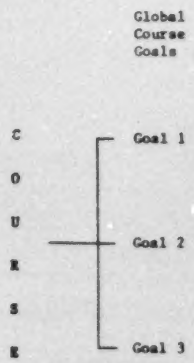

Figure 2: Identification of Global Course Goals - - Beginning the Revised Hierarchical Model

Part II: IDENTIFICATION OF CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES, RESOURCES, EXPECTED OUTCOMES, AND INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Rather than proceed in the normal hierarchical pattern from goals to objectives, a jump is made to the classroom activities. Furthermore, there is no attempt to tie the goals to the activities at this time.

Classroom Activities

The purpose of this particular step is to generate a list of activities performed by the instructor and/or the students. It is next to impossible to sit down and write activities for all classes for the entire year. Therefore, it is suggested that this be done on a daily basis for only one or two classes at a time.

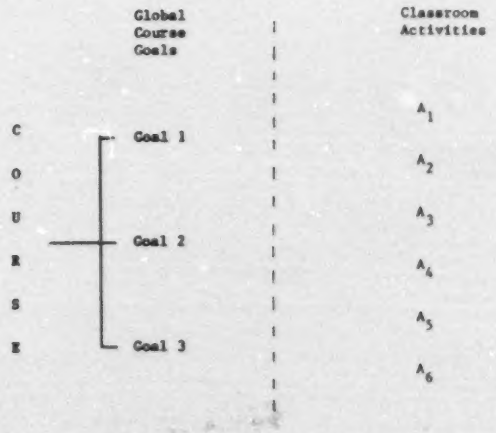

Figure 3: Identification of Classroom Activities

For the selected course or courses, each activity that is planned for each day should be listed. Elaborate sentences or reasons for the activities need not be written. A short phrase is usually descriptive enough. Doing this as a daily routine should not be a burden since it is probably already being done in lesson planning. It is important, however, that these be recorded on a sheet similar to the one illustrated in Appendix B.

Classroom Resources

Again on a daily basis, teachers should write down the special resources that are needed to accomplish the activities listed in the previous section. This will serve as a reminder for the specific instructional day and in future years if the activity is to be repeated. Do not include items that are normally available in the classroom.

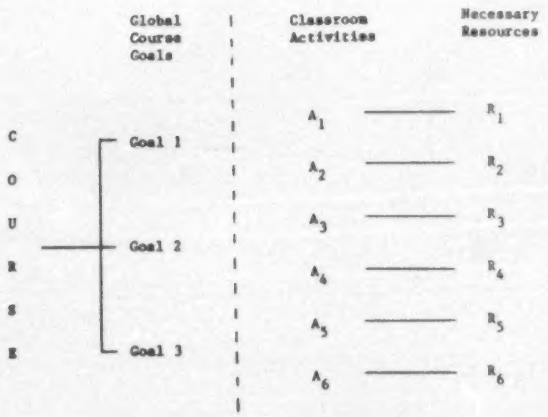

Figure 4: Necessary Classroom Resources

Expected Outcomes

The identification of expected outcomes often seems to be a complex and difficult task. However, it is not complex if approached at the activity level. It is assumed that each teacher has a reason for each planned classroom activity. Even if the purpose be nothing more than to keep the children quiet, it is still a purpose. A teacher need only ask, *Why am I doing this activity?* and the answer should be obvious. If no answer comes to mind, then perhaps the activity should not be done at all. The expected outcome of each activity should be written on the same sheet as the activities and the resources (see Appendix B).

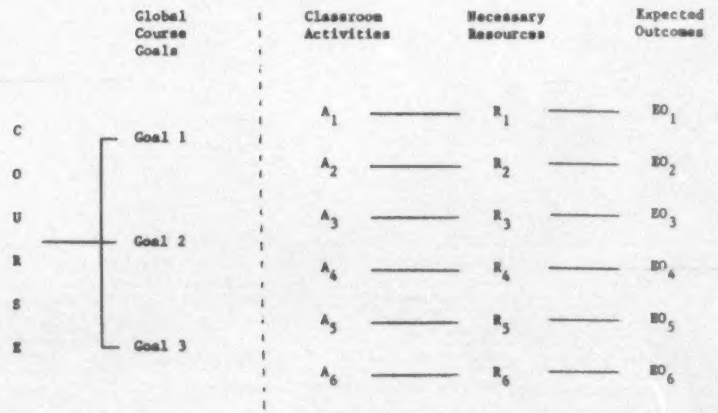

Figure 5: Expected Outcomes of Classroom Activities

Indicators of Success

This step completes the daily record kept on the form shown in Appendix B. The teachers should write down the evidence to be used to indicate whether the expected outcomes were reached or at least approached. Any evidence is acceptable evidence. Granted that some evaluation techniques or methods are stronger than others, anything that gives the teacher an indication is worthy of being called supporative evidence. It may be the teacher's observation of children's smiles or frowns, a paper-and-pencil test, an attitude survey, completed projects, or any number of other indicators.

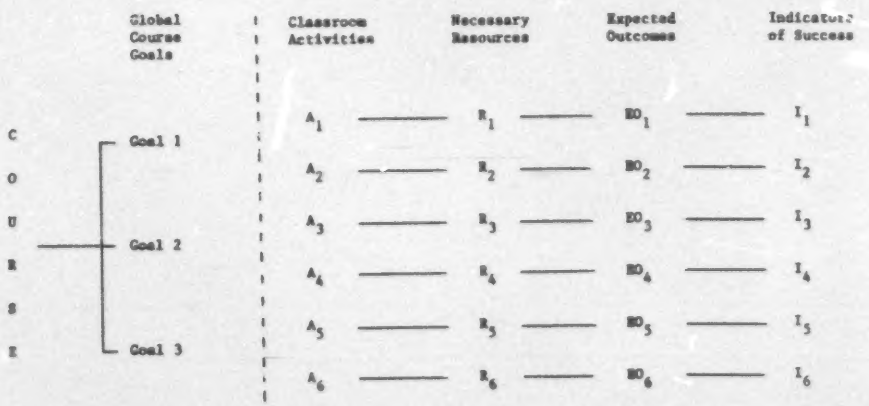

Figure 6: Indicators of Success of Classroom Activities

Part III: COMPLETING THE HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE

Determining Course Objectives From Activity Clusters

While the first two parts consisted mainly of classroom *picture-taking* procedures, Parts III and IV concentrate essentially on analyzing the completeness and appropriateness of the identified activities. The overall intent is to provide a structure upon which to further build a strong instructional program. In order to bridge the gap between the global goals and the classroom activities, an attempt should be made to determine the activities that naturally cluster toward common targets or objectives.

In most instances, two or more activities can be logically grouped. Teachers should periodically examine these groupings and try to write down the common target or objective. These statements should be written much the same as the global goals - - simple, brief, and broad enough in scope to cover the cluster of related activities.

This particular task should not be too difficult, since the process of identifying activities should have already clarified the overall purposes.

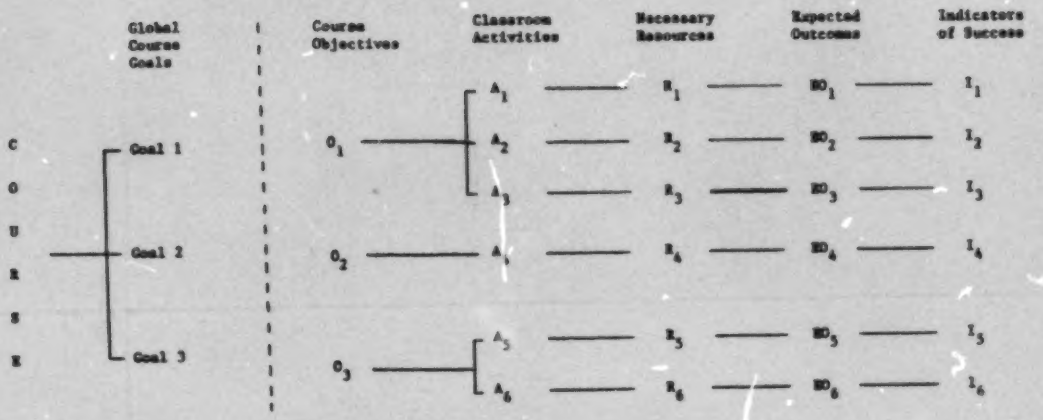

Figure 7: Clustering Activities to Determine Objectives

The model of Figure 7 shows the first three activities directed toward Objective 1 which would have been written as a result of the activities. The fourth activity determines Objective 2 and the last two activities identify Objective 3.

Tying Course Objectives to Global Goals

As each objective is formulated, the teacher should try to classify it into one of the Global Course Goals. Once classified, the entire hierarchical structure from goals to activities will be basically complete. Figure 8 illustrates a partially completed hierarchical structure.

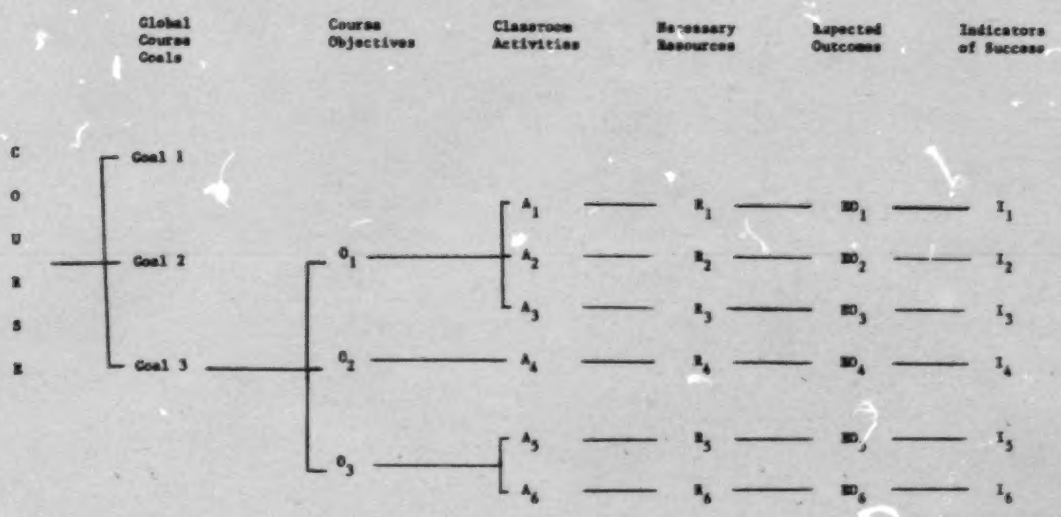

Figure 8: A Course Hierarchical Structure

Part IV: APPROPRIATENESS AND COMPLETENESS

Up to this point, each activity has been identified and examined as a separate entity in terms of its purpose and criteria for success. Furthermore each activity has been identified as part of a hierarchy of objectives and goals.

Part IV now goes one step further by taking a broader look at the overall structure in order to determine appropriateness and completeness.

Relationship Between Activities and Objectives

The objectives were formulated from clusters of activities, but no attempt was made to control for quality. Several questions periodically need answering in order to constantly strive for improvement.

1. Are the activities the very best activities for accomplishing the objectives?
2. Are there certain restrictions, constraints or lack of resources that prohibit certain activities that might be better?
3. At what point will the teacher be satisfied that an objective has been met?
4. Are all of the activities necessary or even worthwhile for the successful completion of an objective?
5. Are there objectives without activities?

Relationship Between Objectives and Global Goals

Similar types of questions should be asked in terms of the relationship between the global course goals and the objectives.

1. Are the objectives the most approprite for attaining the overall goals?

2. At what point will the teacher be satisfied that a goal has been met?

3. After classifying the objectives to the goals, are there goals without any objectives and, consequently, without any classroom activities directed toward those goals?

4. Are there any objectives that are without a goal? If so, a decision has to be made to either drop the objective or formulate a new goal.

Relationship Between the Course and the Goals

Again similar questions can be asked of the relationship between the course and the goals.

1. Are the goals appropriate to the nature of the course?

2. Are there any goal statements that should be added to the course?

3. At what point will the teacher be satisfied that the course is a successful course?

4. Are there other courses that could better accomplish these goals?

CONCLUSION: PROFESSIONALISM IN EDUCATION

Professionalism in education demands that teachers know *what they are doing* and *why they are doing it*. As simple as this statement sounds, there are several concepts underlying it.

What they are doing implies that teachers have a certain amount of subject matter expertise. Without this knowledge base, teaching more closely resembles babysitting rather than teaching. The statement also implies that teachers are aware of their own curriculum and how it complements the overall building or district program.

Why they are doing it not only involves having targets, but also that they be appropriate targets. Furthermore it involves justification of methods used to achieve these targets.

The model presented on the preceding pages can help a teacher with these two aspects of educational professionalism. More specifically, the completion of the model should: (1) satisfy administrators who ask for written objectives; (2) facilitate the improvement of instruction by the strengthening of activities and objectives; (3) assist the teachers in communicating their classroom program to others; and (4) assist in building an accountable position for the teachers.

APPENDIX A

Briefly write 3-7 classroom (course) goals. These goals should be much broader in scope than objectives achievable in two or three days of instruction. These goals should sum up the purposes of at least a semester course.

"AS A RESULT OF THE EXPERIENCES IN YOUR CLASSROOM, YOUR STUDENTS SHOULD (KNOW, FEEL, BE ABLE TO, . . .):"

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

APPENDIX B

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

ACTIVITY	RESOURCES	EXPECTED OUTCOME	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			